



Kenneth I. Gordon
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(Gordon)

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Bedford Research Labs, Rep. Gordon Team Responding to Need for COVID-19 Testing

As soon as she saw the community spread of the COVID-19 virus in Washington State, Bedford Research Foundation's ("BRF") Clinical Laboratory Director Dr. Ann Kiessling sprang into action. Just two weeks later, with the help of Representative Ken Gordon (D-Bedford), BRF is processing hundreds of tests each week for patients exhibiting symptoms that could be caused by the COVID-19 virus, or were directly exposed to it.

With 30 years of experience as a Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments ("CLIA")-licensed FDA-registered lab dedicated to detecting HIV and Hepatitis C, Dr. Kiessling set about to convert her lab to testing for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-2 ("SARS-2") coronavirus responsible for COVID-19. The CLIA certification allowed BRF a streamlined process for testing under FDA guidelines, and because of that, Dr. Kiessling and her staff were able to begin testing samples in a matter of days.

The next problem was obtaining access to those samples. Dr. Kiessling called the Center For Disease Control ("CDC") to tell it she could help with Massachusetts' need. The CDC was excited to have a new source for testing, but had not identified a population center she could serve. She called local hospitals, and while the response was positive, she was put on hold. The Governor's COVID19 emergency center was organizing the response.

"We had the resources to help, and we felt it was our responsibility to pitch in," said Dr. Kiessling. "We have to be prepared for the number of people who display symptoms or have been in contact with those testing positive for the virus to increase. As a matter of public health, we need to know where the virus has spread, and we're happy to do our part."

Dr. Kiessling put in a call to Rep. Gordon, explaining that as a local alternative with faster turn-around than larger, more remote labs, BRF will supplement the CDC-based resources. She was willing to provide testing at cost. Rep. Gordon immediately followed up with a call to Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, who doubles as chief of the COVID-19 command center. A few days later the connection was made. Dr. Kiessling got a call back from Emerson Hospital, telling her that the Commonwealth told them to send samples to her. Not long after that, BRF began receiving samples from Sturdy Memorial Hospital in Attleborough.

BRF is currently testing hundreds of samples each week. It can provide results within two days.

Rep. Gordon is proud that a lab in his district was willing to be part of the solution. “Ann came to me as this outbreak was just beginning. She’s a respected and conscientious HIV researcher, and she explained how she could adapt her experience to focus on this novel virus. There’s no doubt we need more testing in Massachusetts, and the greater the access to reliable labs, especially Massachusetts labs, the better. I explained to Sec. Sudders that if Dr. Kiessling says she can do this, then she can. I’m glad the connection was quickly formed.”

Dr. Kiessling and her staff are not the only Bedford entities in the fight against the SARS-2 coronavirus. Julie Godon is an integral part of Abbott Labs’ marketing of a rapid Coronavirus test that received FDA approval this week. This new test is expected to yield results in a matter of minutes.

BRF testing is available through a patient’s healthcare provider, all testing must be ordered through a clinic or Doctor’s office. It has set up a specialized response email for patients looking for information. Email: covid@bedfordresearch.org.